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MEDHA PATKAR CONVICTED IN 23-YEAR-OLD DEFAMATION SUIT

A Delhi court on Friday convicted the activist in a defamation case filed by Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena against her in Jan 2001

CASE RELATES TO 2000 PRESS NOTE

Origins of the case date back to 2000 when Saxena, who was the chief of Ahmedabad-based NGO National Council for Civil Liberties, published an advertisement against Patkar's Narmada Bachao Andolan, the movement that opposed construction of dams over Narmada river. In response, Patkar allegedly issued a strongly worded press notice in November 2000

'INFLAMMATORY' REMARKS AGAINST SAXENA

- Saxena had filed the defamation suit before a court in Ahmedabad in 2001. It was transferred to Delhi in 2003 following a Supreme Court order
- In the judgment delivered on Friday, Delhi's Metropolitan Magistrate Raghav Sharma noted that Patkar's "inflammatory" press note termed Saxena a "coward and not a patriot", which was a direct attack on his character

2 years

THE ACTIVIST MAY GET A JAIL TERM OF TWO YEARS OR FINE OR BOTH AS PUNISHMENT

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

ICJ orders Israel to halt Rafah offensive

AGENCIES

THE International Court of Justice (ICJ) on Friday ordered Israel to halt its military offensive in the southern Gaza city of Rafah forthwith, but stopped short of calling for a cease-fire. The top UN court, based in the Hague, Netherlands, also directed Tel Aviv to open the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza to allow in humanitarian aid.

Reading out the ruling, ICJ president Nawaf Salam said Israel must "immediately halt its military offensive, and any other action in the Rafah Governorate, which may inflict on the Palestinian group in Gaza conditions of life that could bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part". Israel must also ensure "access to the Gaza Strip of any commission of inquiry, fact-finding mission or other investigative body... to investigate allegations of genocide", it said.

Reacting to the ruling, Israel said its military operations in Rafah are in line with international law, adding that it will keep the Rafah crossing open for humanitarian aid but won't allow terror groups to control the passage.

Soon after the ruling was delivered, Israel warplanes carried out a series of air strikes on the Shaboura camp in Rafah.

Hamas welcomed the ICJ order but said the ruling should have covered the entire Gaza Strip and not just Rafah.

International pressure on Israel to scale down its military operations has grown especially after it turned its focus to Rafah, the main entry point for humanitarian relief for those trapped inside Gaza. According to reports, there is acute food shortage in the enclave while supplies are rotting on the Rafah border crossing.

Israel's sustained hardline stance is under fire even as support for the Palestinian cause has grown. This week alone, three European countries—Ireland, Norway, and Spain—said they would recognise Palestine state.

In an earlier ruling in January, the ICJ had asked Israel to prevent acts of genocide against Palestinians and protect civilians, but did not order a ceasefire. ICJ rulings are binding, but the court has no power to enforce them.

The case before the ICJ was brought by South Africa last year alleging Israel breached the 1948 UN Genocide Convention—a charge denied by Tel Aviv. P12

Monsoon likely to hit Karnataka by May 31: IMD

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

THE India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast an early onset of South West Monsoon (SWM) in Kerala and Karnataka. It has also forecast rain in most parts of Karnataka till May-end.

Earlier, the IMD stated that monsoon was likely to hit Kerala on June 4.

N Puviyarasan, director of IMD, Bengaluru, said with the advancement of various systems and formation of new systems, the onset of monsoon is likely to be advanced. It is likely to hit Kerala by May 30 and Karnataka by May 31. He said an advance or delay by five days would be considered whenever monsoon is forecast.

In 2023, against the normal rainfall of 831.8 mm from June to September (the SWM period), Karnataka received 678.4 mm, a deficit of 18%, according to IMD. CONTINUED ON P5

College girl's murder: Bro's friend arrested

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

SUBRAMANYAPURA police have solved the mystery behind the death of a 20-year-old BBA student on May 15 by arresting her brother's friend, who is a minor. The 14-year-old boy allegedly murdered Prabhuddha by slitting her throat and wrist with a kitchen knife.

The accused had stolen money from Prabhuddha's purse to repair the spectacles of his friend. Prabhuddha, who was aware of the theft, kept asking him to return the stolen money. Unable to return it, the accused allegedly murdered her, the police said. Prabhuddha was found dead in the bathroom of her house at Brindavan Layout near Padmanabha Nagar. P5

No SC directive on voter turnout data to poll body

Says it favours a hands-off approach amid the ongoing electoral process in the country

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Friday refused to issue any order to the Election Commission of India on a plea seeking directions to upload polling station-wise voter turnout data on its website within 48 hours of voting for each phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

IN THE SC

AA BAIL MUJHE MAAR

The SC cited the Hindi proverb "aa bail mujhe maar" (inviting trouble) to explain the EC's plight on the Voter Turnout app, since it only gives out approximations. The EC is not statutorily required to put out data on the app

While declining to pass any order on the plea of the Association for Democratic Reforms and Mahua Moitra, a vacation bench of justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma said, "We did not find any merit in the prayers to issue any direction to the ECI."

Noting that the interim request by the petitioners was the same as that sought in the main petition pending before the court since 2019, the bench said, "Granting the interim relief would mean allowing the final relief."

The court said a hands-off approach is needed in the midst of the polls. Everyone wants free and fair elections but "we are also concerned that there could be mischievous people looking to take advantage," the bench said.

"Prima facie we are not inclined to grant any interim relief since prayer A (of the petitioners) of the 2019 petition is similar to prayer B of the 2024 application. List the interim plea after (summer) vacation," the court said without fixing any date for hearing.

"This particular compliance which you (ADR) are insisting upon would require not only manpower but also require mandamus (a judicial writ). It is not possible during this period. We have to be conscious of the ground reality and cannot change the process mid-way," the court said.

The ECI's affidavit had said uploading of Form 17C (record of votes polled) on the official website could lead to mischief, creating widespread discomfort and mistrust.

Youth leader gives Khattar cold sweats in Karnal

HARPREET BAJWA @ Chandigarh

THE Karnal Lok Sabha constituency in Haryana is all set for a tight contest as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) veteran and former Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar is pitted against Congress' young gun Divyanshu Budhiraja.

Both belong to the Punjabi community and are bachelors. While Khattar is from the Nindana village in Rohtak district, Budhiraja is from Gohana in Sonipat district.

SHOWTIME FOR GLADIATORS

A two-time MLA, Khattar, 70, is contesting in a parliamentary election for the first time. After Nayab Singh Saini took over as Haryana chief minister in March, the BJP announced Khattar's Lok Sabha candidature from Karnal.

For Khattar, a lot is at stake. He not only has to win, but maintain a high victory margin. If sitting BJP MP Sanjay Bhatia created a high benchmark by bagging 70.08% votes, Bhatia's predecessor Ashwani Kumar Chopra from the same party got 49.84% votes in 2014.

Khattar, known for his simple lifestyle, had a clean image as the chief minister for two consecutive terms since 2014. A Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh man, he also has a reputation for being a hard taskmaster with a no-nonsense approach. His political acumen and organisational skills are his strengths. In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi handpicked him to lead the first BJP government in Haryana.

Divyanshu Budhiraja (left) and Manohar Lal Khattar

ILLUSTRATION: MANDAR PARDIKAR

Incidentally, 30-year-old Budhiraja's political career too began in 2014 when he was elected the president of the Panjab University Students' Council. Three years later, in 2017, he was elected the state unit president of the National Students' Union of India, the student wing of the Congress party. In 2021, he became the president of the Haryana Youth Congress.

Though Budhiraja is new to national politics, he had hogged headlines long back when he publicly confronted Khattar. In 2018, he led a group of students of Panchkula Government College to block the convoy of Khattar, then Haryana chief minister, to protest against unemployment. He was arrested and jailed for three days.

Budhiraja continues to attack Khattar on unemployment, which according to him is the biggest issue in Haryana. "Despite being the chief minister for nine-and-a-half years, Khattar could not ensure development in the state. What can he do for the people of Karnal now? He was removed from the post of CM. I think people will not accept a rejected CM in the constituency," he said.

Lok Sabha elections to Karnal will be held in the sixth phase on May 25. Other candidates in the fray are Devender Kadian of the Jannayak Janta Party and Virender Maratha of the Nationalist Congress Party. Since 1952, the Congress has won this seat 11 times and the BJP five times.

Mysuru filmmaker bags La Cinef Award at Cannes festival

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Mysuru

MYSURU-based filmmaker **Chidananda S Naik** has bagged the prestigious La Cinef Award at the 77th Cannes Film Festival for his short film, "Sunflowers Were the First Ones to Know".

Naik, a doctor-turned-filmmaker and an alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII), received the award in the best short film category.

It is a 16-minute short film based on a well-known folktale from Karnataka. The plot revolves around an elderly woman who steals a rooster in her village. The film was produced as part of the one-year course at FTII. Interestingly, it is for the first time that a student's film made during the course at FTII has won the prestigious award. CONTINUED ON P5

29 AUGUST 1929- 24 MAY 2024

SAROJ GOENKA PASSES AWAY

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Chennai

SAROJ Goenka, daughter-in-law of the legendary media baron Ramnath Goenka, passed away at her home in Chennai on Friday. Her youngest daughter Kavita Singhania was by her side when the end came at 11.30 am. She was 95.

Saroj is the daughter of Shreyans Prasad Jain, after whom the SP Jain College in Mumbai is named. She was cremated at 5.30 pm at the Besant Nagar electrical crematorium. A condolence meeting will be held on Sunday between 2 pm and 4 pm at her Express Estate residence.

Born on August 29, 1929, Saroj married Ramnath Goenka's son Bhagwan Das Goenka. After the untimely demise of her spouse in 1979, she took over as the managing director of The Indian Express (Madurai) Ltd, a position she held till 1995. She was president of Indian Newspaper Society in 1984-85.

Saroj later became chairperson of Express Infrastructure Ltd, which runs the tony Express Avenue mall on Mount Road. On August 30, 2010, the then chief minister M Karunanidhi inaugurated Express Avenue. "Express Avenue is like a crowning memorial for the services rendered by Ramnath Goenka, the doyen of Indian journalism," Karunanidhi said while speaking on the occasion.

Affectionately called Amma, Saroj was well known for her charitable activities like running an orphanage, the Daya Sadan Childrens Town at Nerkundram in the city. For a long time, she made weekly visits to Daya Sadan on Saturdays to personally oversee its functioning.

She also ran the Moongibai Goenka Girls Higher Secondary School at Sowcarpet in Chennai. Named after her mother-in-law, the school was started in 1949. Saroj is survived by three daughters, Arati Agarwal, Ritu Goenka, and Kavita Singhania.

Condoling the demise, Sudha Ravi, a long-time friend of Saroj, recalled that she was a good student of Vedanta under Swami Paramarthananda. She used to attend the Swamiji's classes regularly and completed the study of many Upanishads and Vedantic texts, she said.

Sudha is a trustee of the Gandhigram Khadi and Village Industries Public Charitable Trust. She said that Saroj was a great supporter of the Crafts Council of India. "She was a wonderful human being — very kind, very warm," Sudha reminisced.

EXPRESS READ

One more accused in Bengaluru cafe blast case arrested

Bengaluru: Three days after a crackdown across four states in the Bengaluru cafe blast case, the NIA on Friday arrested one more accused. Shoaib Ahmed Mirza alias Chottu, 35, is an ex-convict in a LeT terror conspiracy case. He is a resident of Hubballi | P3

8 members of two families killed in road accidents

Chikkamagaluru/Haveri: Eight people died in road accidents in Chikkamagaluru and Haveri districts on Friday. Four members of a family died on the spot and 12 were injured in the accident involving two cars and a truck near Kottigehara in Chikkamagaluru. Four members of a family died when their car fell off a bridge on the outskirts of Ranebennur | P5